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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 002141

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO AND AF/S; NSC FOR AFRICA SR. ADVISER FRAZER

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICAN TAKE ON DIALOGUE

REF: HARARE 2123

Classified By: Joseph G. Sullivan for Reasons 1.5B/D

1. (C) Summary: South African High Commissioner Jeremiah Ndou told the Ambassador Oct 27 that dialogue/negotiations between ZANU/PF and the MDC had progressed well on both constitutional as well as transitional arrangements. He said that there had been some recent backsliding by ZANU-PF, however, and that President Mbeki would likely call Mugabe to press for completing the dialogue. Ndou said he expected an eventual agreement to settle for advancing the presidential election to 2005, coincident with parliamentary elections; leaving Mugabe as president with reduced powers; and installing a transitional authority with MDC presence to oversee electoral law revisions and other changes. Ndou, however, acknowledged that the lack of a clear succession process within ZANU-PF was delaying progress. To Ndou's question, the Ambassador said that we were pleased that President Mbeki had taken responsibility for finding a speedy resolution to the crisis in Zimbabwe. End Summary

2. (SBU) HC Ndou had to change the venue of the meeting because about four thousand Zimbabwean visa seekers were constantly present outside the SAG High Commission offices. He noted the growing impact of Zimbabweans in South Africa which made resolution of Zimbabwe's crisis more urgent.

3.(C) Ndou said that Mugabe had recently told UN SYG Annan that he was ready to leave office soon. Ndou said that considerable progress had been made in talks between ZANU-PF and MDC with virtual agreement on a new constitution to be adopted either by parliamentary vote or a referendum. He also said, as had the MDC(reftel) that the principal difference now was over when new presidential elections should be held. But unlike the MDC, Ndou claimed there was virtual agreement on the shape of a transitional authority to govern Zimbabwe until new elections. Ndou said that presidential powers would be sharply reduced under a new constitution and a transitional authority would be established, similar to that which prevailed in South Africa in the period before majority rule elections. Ndou said that the MDC would have representation in all important ministries in the period leading up to new elections. Ndou did not call this a national unity government, but instead the necessary opposition presence in a transitional authority to assure that election rule reform and other changes were carried out properly. He thought the most likely agreed date for new presidential elections was 2005, since it would take at least nine months and maybe more to organize a free election.

4. (C) Ndou said that the progress made so far toward agreement was now threatened by recent signs of Mugabe backing away from what had been agreed, apparently because of internal ZANU-PF differences over the succession. Ndou called Minister John Nkomo a positive influence for dialogue, but pointed to Jonathan Moyo and others as seeking to undermine any agreement reached, since they were opponents of change. Ndou lamented that ZANU-PF was so top-driven that no change in party leadership would occur without clear direction from Mugabe. He said that President Mbeki would likely have to call Mugabe to press the process forward. He did not think Mbeki would travel to Zimbabwe at this time, however.

5.(C) Ndou also lamented GOZ actions to close the "Daily News" and keep it closed, notwithstanding the administrative court ruling in its favor. Ndou had hoped that the Government might take advantage of the court ruling to back away from a confrontation which was costing it internationally. Ndou said that instead Jonathan Moyo had been able to enlist the police and the President in his efforts to keep the "Daily News" shut regardless of court rulings. We have heard that Mugabe had promised South African Vice President Zuma to "let the law take its course" with respect to the "Daily News." Comment: Apparently, that promise only applies to cases where the court rules in the Government's favor. End Comment.

6. (C) Ndou asked the Ambassador about the US position. The Ambassador said that we were pleased that President Mbeki had committed to resolving the Zimbabwean crisis on an urgent basis and hoped that this would happen quickly before more damage was done to the country and the region. The Ambassador

also said that we would be wary of any arrangement which kept Mugabe in the presidency and that significant financial assistance and a new agreement with the IMF and the World Bank would be unlikely until there was an elected government.

17. (C) Comment: We are not sure whether the MDC or South African version of the extent of agreement between the parties on transitional arrangements is more correct. Each has reason to overstate its case. It remains to be seen whether Mugabe and ZANU-PF have been at all sincere or are merely playing for time. It is Mbeki who is in the best position to call their cards.

SULLIVAN